

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A method of upgrading a computer system having a first software component and a second software component, said first and second software components operating at a current version, said method comprising:

upgrading the first software component to an upgraded version; and

validating the performance of the upgraded first software component, said validating comprising translating messages originating at the first software component from an upgraded version format to a current version format.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said computer system comprises a first processor executing the first software component and a second processor executing the second software component.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the first software component comprises at least one interface, and said upgrading comprises upgrading the interface.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

querying a version of the first software component and the second software component; and

determining a compatible version for the computer system.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the compatible version is the current version.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein said upgrading comprises adding new features and said validating comprises disabling the new features.

7. The method of claim 6, further comprising activating the new features if the validating is acceptable.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising upgrading the second software component to the upgraded version if the validating is acceptable.

9. A computer system comprising:

- a first processor;
- a second processor coupled to said first processor;
- a computer readable memory having instructions stored thereon that cause a first software component to be executed by said first processor, and a second software component to be executed by said second processor;

said instructions further causing said computer system to:

- upgrade the first software component to an upgraded version; and
- validate the performance of the upgraded first software component, said validating comprising translating messages originating at the first software component from an upgraded version format to a current version format.

10. The computer system of claim 9, wherein the first software component comprises at least one interface, and said upgrading comprises upgrading the interface.

11. The computer system of claim 9, said instructions further causing said computer system to:

query a version of the first software component and the second software component; and

determine a compatible version for the computer system.

12. The computer system of claim 11, wherein the compatible version is the current version.

13. The computer system of claim 9, wherein said upgrading comprises adding new features and said validating comprises disabling the new features.

14. The computer system of claim 13, said instructions further causing said computer system to activate the new features if the validating is acceptable.

15. The computer system of claim 9, said instructions further causing said computer system to upgrade the second software component to the upgraded version if the validating is acceptable.

16. The computer system of claim 9, wherein said first and second processors comprise a fault tolerant system.

17. The computer system of claim 9, wherein said first and second processors comprise a multi-processor system.

18. An upgradable computer system comprising:

a first software component and a second software component, said first and second software components operating at a current version;

means for upgrading the first software component to an upgraded version; and

means for validating the performance of the upgraded first software component, comprising means for translating messages originating at the first software component from an upgraded version format to a current version format.

19. The computer system of claim 18, further comprising a first processor executing the first software component and a second processor executing the second software component.

20. The computer system of claim 18, wherein the first software component comprises at least one interface, and said means for upgrading comprises upgrading the interface.

21. The computer system of claim 18, further comprising:

means for querying a version of the first software component and the second software component; and

means for determining a compatible version for the computer system.

22. A software component adapted to be used in a fault tolerant computer system, said component comprising:

an interface; and

a translation function;

wherein said translation function translates messages from said interface to a version common to all other software components of the computer system.

23. The software component of claim 22, wherein said interface is upgraded.

395821\_1.DOC